WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE A. F. OF L., BY INSTRUCTION OF ST. LOUIS CONVENTION, DIRECTED THE OFFICERS AT HEADQUARTERS TO FURNISH A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER, FREE OF COST, TO ALL OFFICIAL LABOR PUBLICATIONS.

Containing a brief summary of important matters, affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will further the development and progress of the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
HEADQUARTERS
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POSTOFFICE DEPARTMENT CHALLENGED

Senator La Follette and Congressman Lloyd Introduce Bills in Both Houses

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS ARE DENIED

Hearings Before House Committee on Reform in the Civil Service Have Already Begun.

Washington, April 22.--When the Postoffice Department commenced its present efforts to deny the men employed in the railway mail service the right to organize by official orders, public and secret, discrimination, coercion, discharge, reduction in rank and pay, and by these reprehensible methods forcing them out of the service, it evidently did not anticipate that much opposition would be encountered. Contrary to expectation the men in this branch of the service almost unanimously resented any attempt on the part of the department depriving them the right of association, as an invasion of their constitutional rights. As a silent answer to the department forbidding organization, several unions have been formed, and with rapidly increasing membership. Four charters have been issued from headquarters this week. From many sections come the report that local unions are in the process of formation.

Senator La Follette congressionally took up the cause of the railway mail clerks by issuing a letter and enclosing a blank containing a list of questions. This letter and blank was mailed to the clerks. The senator assured the clerks receiving his communication that all answers would be considered confidential. As a result replies have been coming in at the rate of approximately 400 per day, and from present indications fully 90 percent will respond. The letters from the clerks clearly prove that the department has gone the full length to attain its end.

A few days ago two bills were introduced in Congress, one by Senator La Follette, S. 1162, and one by Congressman Lloyd, H. R. 5970, The latter bill was referred to the House Committee on Reform in the Civil Service. The Senate bill has been referred to the Committee on Civil Service and Retrenchment. Following this comes a bill introduced by Congressman Howard of Georgia, House Resolution 102, which demands a "thorough and searching inquiry into operation and conduct" of the Postoffice Department. Among several subjects specifically designated to be inquired into are the following:

"First: If un-American practices of intimidation and coercion of postal employes exist.

"Second: If employes in the Railway Mail Service, under threat of suspension, have been denied the right to organize for mutual protection and to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor."

Upon the introduction of these bills effort was immediately made to get a hearing before the House Committee to which had been referred the Lloyd bill. As a result a hearing was had on Thursday, April 20, and President Gompers and Secretary Morrison appeared on behalf of the American Federation of Labor. President Gompers outlined the structure and scope of the labor movement and emphatically insisted that as the American labor movement was constructed in accordance with American institutions no department of government or official had the right to deny to the men employed in the classified service the exercise of their constitutional guarantees. He also read before the committee the obligation taken by members of the American Federation of Labor, and challenged anyone to dispute the fact that the obligation in any way precluded the individual conforming to the same and at the same time comply with the obligation imposed upon men by the department in the efficient discharge of their duties.

Secretary Morrison then produced a mass of documentary evidence to prove that the postoffice department has openly and secretly discriminated against the American Federation of Labor. Much of the evidence consists of letters from a number of Railway Mail Clerks, containing lists of questions that have been propounded to them, and the similarity of these questions at once indicate that they had been framed by one individual. Secret orders of the department were also presented.

By this time the committee began to realize the importance and magnitude of the case, and as the lower house has ruled that no committees shall remain in session during the debate on the reciprocity measure the committee was compelled to adjourn as the house was about to be called to order. No definite time has been set for another meeting, but it will occur next week. At that time no doubt some representative of the Postoffice Department will be present.

The activities of the department in this direction has caused intense interest, and a number of congressmen have introduced bills that relate directly to the mail service. The fact that former Postmaster General Cortelyou publicly acquisced in the formation of unions among the men in the classified service is decidedly interesting, and throws an unwelcome shadow over the actions of the present head of the Postoffice Department.

BREWERY WORKERS WIN

After a Contest Lasting Approximately One Year a Victory Is Achieved By Workmen.

Washington, April 22.--Telegraphic advices contain the cheering news that the Brewery Workers, after a heroic struggle of long duration, have signed an agreement with every firm and agency in the city of Los Angeles, Cal., employing members of that craft. The splendid fight being conducted by the California unionists is beginning to bear fruit, and from further advices received other settlements are in sight.

MAIL SERVICE AUTOCRAT

Superintendent of Thirteenth Division Delivers Himself of Feudal Age Opinions.

Washington, April 22.--"Divine right" Baer, the coal king, will be compelled to enter the lists to defend his reputation if Superintendent Vaille of the Thirteenth division, railway mail service, has capacity to keep the pace he has set by his declaration concerning the rights of men employed in the railway mail service. Comment is needless. Just scan the statement of the superintendent published in the Seattle Times:

"The railway mail clerks have an organization," said Mr. Vaille this morning, "known as the Railway Mail Association. Its membership is confined to clerks in the railway service, and it is recognized by the department and always has worked in harmony with it. This organization is a fraternal order. It provides its members benefits in case of accident and promotes the social interests of its members.

"Some of the younger element, however, believe that the association is not radical enough. It is these who are most active in organizing the labor union in the East. The object of the union is to procure for its members more pay at a cost of less work, ignoring the right of the service to the best work they can perform.

"Railway mail clerks have no place in the ranks of skilled labor, and for one to affiliate himself with a union is to place his work on a par with that of a stevedore or a mechanic.

"If they regard themselves merely as laborers working for hire, it is impossible that they should bring to the performance of their duties the enthusiasm born of love for their work and a full realization of the responsibilities placed upon them. No man who regards himself merely as a skilled laborer can be a good postal clerk and be the proper man for our service. A time server has no place in our service and it is better off without him."

Secretary Morrison of the American Federation of Labor, upon receiving the information regarding the attitude of Superintendent Vaille gave out the following:

The railway mail clerks are a mighty fine body of men, I know they do not share the opinion of Mr. Vaille in regard to mechanics, nor any other class of workers. I suppose Mr. Vaille is so in love with his work that he could not be coaxed to leave it by the offer of increased wages. He works for sheer love of it.

Mr. Vaille does not regard himself as a skilled laborer. If he did, according to his statement he "could not be a good postal clerk and be a proper man for the service." In other words, every man not a postal clerk, who works at any occupation, no matter how skilled, is a time server. The man who builds the great guns and warships, the man who constructs the most delicate mechanisms in existence are

ON THE JOB

California Men of Labor Secure Legislation Vital to Every Workman in the State.

Washington, April 22.--Officials of the State Federation of Labor of California, materially aided by the organizations of San Francisco, have made a record in obtaining legislation during the recent session of the legislature of that state. Among other laws passed, the following are the more prominent:

Employers' liability and workmen's compensation act, eight hours for women; the repeal of a law which made it a misdemeanor to "entice a seaman to desert," this bill or repeal having been passed by two previous sessions and twice vetoed by Governor Gillett; a child labor bill forbidding minors under 18 years to work between 10 o'clock in the evening and 5 o'clock in the morning; a full train crew bill. Free labor bureaus are to be established in San Francisco and Los Angeles; a lien law which will enable members of the building trade unions to secure unpaid wages due them; a law to compel advertisers for labor to state truth if strike or lockout is in force.

A number of other laws were passed, and with the strict enforcement great benefit will result to workmen.

HAIR-SPLITTING DECISION

English House of Lords a Replica of Many of Our Judicial Tribunals—Instead of Interpreting Law, Enact It.

Washington, April 22.--While there have been many decisions rendered by American courts that are abortive, which has led to great abuses and a general decline of respect and confidence in the judicial branch of the government, yet England is apparently striving, in some instances, at least to emulate judicial practice of this country. A workingmen's compensation act is in force in Great Britain, and under its provisions all wage earners are included. Recently a taxi cab driver was injured in cranking his machine and applied for compensation provided by law where the injury received compelled cessation of work. The taxi cab company refused to acquiesce in the demand and the case was taken to court. The Westminster county court decided against the driver. It was then appealed to the court of appeal, which sustained the decision of the lower courts. Another appeal was taken to the house of lords, and this augus body also sustained the decision of the court of appeal. But the curious mental twist of the minds of those making the decision is worthy of close scrutiny, and while pathetic, is also amusing. The meat of the decision is as follows:

"That a driver who receives a percentage of his cab's earnings by way of payment, instead of a fixed salary, is not a workman within the meaning of the workingmen's compensation act."

mechanisms in existence, according to Mr. Vaille, are time servers, and would not be a class of men that should be employed by the Government.

Now, let us look at the other side of the picture and see what there is about the work that Mr. Vaille does that calls for a master mind, or even special skill. Mr. Vaille is a division superintendent; he does not even have to know the offices in his division. The railway mail clerks keep them in mind. To perfect themselves they had to give several years to the work in the first instance, and are compelled to work a certain number of hours each day to keep themselves in possession of all the necessary information to do the work. All Mr. Vaille has to do is to carry out the instructions of the General Superintendent. What superior brain force is necessary to do that? He does not create anything that it would be necessary to bring "to the performance of his duties the enthusiasm born of a love for work, and a full realization of the responsibilities placed upon him."

The work that gives the greatest pleasure to any one is the work that enables a man to create some useful thing, or a thing of beauty. The man who takes a piece of iron and forges a horse shoe has pride in it because it is the product of his skill. The printer who sets, the pressman who prints colored advertisements, or books of advertisements which are pleasing to the eye; the jeweler who moulds out of gold and silver beautiful emblems; the painter, the photo-engraver, the carpenter, aye, the mechanics of every trade, skilled or unskilled, are always in love with their work; if they were not, they could not acquire the skill necessary to excel in their particular craft or calling.

BUTTONWORKERS STILL ON STRIKE

Employers Agreed to Terms of Settlement and then Repudiated Them Before Ink Was Dry.

Washington, April 22.--News reached headquarters a few days ago that an amicable agreement had been arrived at between the buttonworkers of Muscatine, Iowa, and their employers. Immediately following this information telegraphic advices came in stating that the employers, after having agreed to a plan of settlement, repudiated it within twenty-four hours. The people of Muscatine are in entire accord with the buttonworkers in their effort to get a living wage, and since the repudiation by the employers of their agreement the sympathy of the public has been intensified. The status of affairs at the present time is that the buttonworkers will win the contest.

FLORIDA UNIONISTS ACTIVE.

Washington, April 22.--Organized labor of the state of Florida is up and doing and will seek to have the legislature enact into law an employers' liability bill, establishment of a bureau of labor statistics, together with other constructive legislation.

ANTI-INJUNCTION -- ANTI-TRUST.

Representative Wilson (Miner) Reintroduces His Bill to Correct Abuse in Issuing Injunctions and Relief From Anti-Trust Law.

Washington, April 22.--Last Saturday Mr. Wilson introduced his bill in the House "To regulate the issuance of restraining orders and injunctions and procedure thereon and to limit the meaning of 'conspiracy' in certain cases." The number of the bill is H. R. 5328. It was referred to the House Judiciary Committee. The full text of the bill is as follows:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, That no restraining order or injunction shall be granted by any court of the United States, or a judge or the judges thereof, in any case between an employer and employe, or between employers and employes, or between employes, or between persons employed and persons seeking employment, or involving or growing out of a dispute concerning terms or conditions of employment, unless necessary to prevent irreparable injury to property or to a property right of the party making the application, for which injury there is no adequate remedy at law; and such property and property right must be particularly described in the application, which must be in writing and sworn to by the applicant or by his, her, or its agent or attorney. And for the purposes of this Act no right to continue the relation of employer and employe, or to assume or create such relation with any particular person or persons, or at all, or to carry on business of any particular kind, or at any particular place, or at all, shall be construed, held, considered, or treated as property or as constituting a property right.

Sec. 2. That in cases arising in the courts of the United States or coming before said courts, or before any judge or the judges thereof, no agreement between two or more persons concerning the terms or conditions of employment, or the assumption or creation or termination of any relation between employer and employe, or concerning any act or thing to be done or not to be done with reference to or involving or growing out of a labor dispute, shall constitute a conspiracy or other civil or criminal offense, or be punished or prosecuted, or damages recovered upon as such, unless the act or thing agreed to be done or not to be done would be unlawful if done by a single individual; nor shall the entering into or the carrying out of any such agreement be restrained or enjoined unless such act or thing agreed to be done would be subject to be restrained or enjoined under the provisions, limitations, and definitions contained in the first section of this act.

Sec. 3. That all acts and parts of acts in conflict with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed.

EMPLOYES' COMPENSATION LAW

State of Washington Enacts Progressive Legislation Protecting Workmen Against Injury.

Washington, April 22.--Detailed information has just been received at the headquarters of the American Federation of Labor relative to the employes' compensation law recently passed by the state legislature of Washington. The new law covers the subject in the most comprehensive manner.

A tax is to be levied upon all employers of labor ranging from .020 to .100 percent per year upon the amount of the average pay roll, according to class. Industry is divided into various classes 47 in number. A death benefit of $75 is provided for, and in addition monthly payments are to be made to the widow during widowhood, and $5 per month for each child, under the age of 16 at the occurrence of the injury until such child shall have reached sixteen, but total payment shall not exceed $35 per month. Upon marriage of widow a lump sum equal to twelve times her monthly allowance, $240 shall be paid her, but the pay for children under sixteen shall be continued as above. The law relating to permanent disability or death reads as follows:

"For every case of injury resulting in death or permanent total disability it shall be the duty of the department to forthwith notify the state treasurer, and he shall set apart out of the accident fund a sum of money for the case, to be known as the estimated lump value of the monthly payments provided for it, to be calculated upon the theory that a monthly payment of $20. to a person 30 years of age, is equal to a lump sum payment, according to the expectancy of life as fixed by the American Mortality table of $4,000, but the total in no case to exceed the sum of $4,000."

The sum thus arrived at will be placed at interest to provide the monthly payments given above.

BILLS RECENTLY INTRODUCED

Important Legislation Contemplated by Presentation of Bills Covering Various Subjects.

Washington, April 22.--Bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives to regulate the immigration of aliens into the United States, the one carrying the illiteracy test being urged by the American Federation of Labor.

Another bill provides for the establishment of a children's bureau to be connected with the Department of Commerce and Labor. The functions of the bureau shall "be to investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life, and shall especially investigate the questions of infant mortality, the birth rate, physical degeneracy, orphanage, juvenile courts, desertion, dangerous occupations, accidents and diseases of children, employment, legislation affecting children in the several states and territories, and such other facts as have a bearing upon the welfare of children."

LOAN SHARKS MUST GO

Introduction of Bill to Prohibit "Shylocks" from Operating in the District of Columbia.

Washington, April 22.--It is a matter of common knowledge that the city of Washington harbors countless numbers of loan sharks that pray upon government employes, extorting from them fabulous rates of interest and frequently dictating promotions as the result of their death grip upon the salaries of their victims. It is said that many "respectables" assume the detestable Shakesperean role, and with a "standin" with heads of departments have been beyond the reach of any one desiring to prohibit this practice.

But the obnoxious practice is now to be actively fought. Many of the residents are at last aroused, and there has been a bill introduced in Congress to correct this abuse. The bill provides that each person, firm or corporation loaning money in this manner must be licensed, furnishing a bond in the sum of $5,000. In violations of the law penalties are provided from a fine ranging from $25 to $200 and by imprisonment from five to thirty days, or both fine and imprisonment.

COMPLIMENT WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

Executive Council of A. F. of L. Receive Commendation for Inauguration of News Letter.

Washington, April 22.--Since the inauguration of the Weekly News Letter two weeks ago a large number of congratulatory communications has been received at headquarters. Washington, aside from being the headquarters of the trade union movement, together with Congress in session the greater part of the year, is an ideal location as a news gathering point. So far as the labor movement is concerned it is strongly reflected in all its details at A. F. of L. headquarters. From the legislative end it is possible to watch minutely the doings of the national legislature and inform the union population of the entire country the important happenings from week to week.

KANSAS LEGISLATION

Splendid Advance in Progressive Labor Legislation Made in the Sunflower State.

Washington, April 22.-- Kansas unionists did themselves proud during the last session of the state legislature. A workingmen's compensation law was secured. Also a law requiring all coal mines to be provided with bath houses, with a shower attachment. Also that all coal mines must be thoroughly equipped with a telephone system. A railroad liability law similar to the federal act; power headlights for locomotives, and secured the establishment of a school of mines and metallurgy.

"CRIBBING" UNION FUNDS

An English Labor Journal Publishes a Humorous Episode Written Under Nom de Plume of "Picket."

Washington, April 22.—Much comment is indulged in by Americans relative to the slow comprehension by Englishmen of our wit. But that Britons are not totally devoid of a sense of levity, the accompanying storiette shows. It also finds its counterpart on this side of the Atlantic:

"In approaching the subject of the 'rush' for union benefits I know that I am liable to tread on many corns. But it can't be helped. The position, put tersely, is this: Many unions and many officials in the past have adopted a sentimental rule-of-thumb method of 'stretching a point.' The time for taking a shilling liability for twopence is, however, a thing of the past. It has been demonstrated a score of times that the members who pay the most grudgingly, and who do the least for a union, are the keenest on benefits. They remind one of an old fogey who, after great persuasion, consented to be proposed as a member of a political club. The entrance fee was a shilling and the contributions a penny a week. He was admitted, but he 'wanted to know, you know.'

" 'What are the benefits?' he asked.

" 'Oh, you'll help the cause.'

" 'Aye, but what is the sick pay?'

" 'There is no sick pay.'

" 'No sick pay. What do you pay at death?'

" 'Nothing.'

" 'Then you can strike me off your books as soon as you like. I thought it was a blooming take-down.'

"So it is with hundreds of operatives in our 'cheaper' unions, or on our 'cheaper' scales. They are out for a shilling for twopence, and they won't get it. Trade unions are not to be worked on the 'principle' of horse-backing. Benefits must be based on actuarial estimates."

ENAMELLERS WIN

After a Strike of Short Duration Satisfactory Agreement Has Been Concluded.

Washington, April 22.—The strike of the members of the Enamellers' union of Port Hope, Ontario, on account of the discharge of the president for his membership in the union, and on account of the efforts of the management to prevent the formation of a union, has been adjusted by Organizer Flett and all of the men returned to work with the assurance that no further discrimination would be made against them on account of their membership in the union.

ATLANTA BUILDERS' EXCHANGE

"Resolves" to Smash the Eight-Hour Day With a Few Blows of Its Little Hatchet.

Washington, April 22.--Kirby of the Manufacturers' Association has a new role. Finding that the organization of which he is the head was incapable of destroying union labor, he now is the generalissimo of organizations now being formed in the South and other localities under the title of Builders' Exchanges. Copies of resolutions adopted by the Atlanta (Ga.) Builders' Exchange have just reached the Headquarters of the A. F. of L. These resolutions start out with an inflation equal to the resolution promulgated by the "three tailors of Tooley street", and with the sensational announcement that "they advocate nine hours as a proper workday." The compilers of the resolutions refer with avidity and pride to the hearings before the Naval Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives during the closing hours of the sixty-first Congress. They do not have a word to say, however, of how armor plate fell in price from $725 per ton to $300 per ton as the result of union labor's agitation. They also forget (?) to mention the fact that as a result of the government deciding to construct battleships in its own navy yard that the contract price of private ship building companies fell from $313 per ton displacement (the Oregon's price) to $180 per ton displacement (the Utah's price) and during that period all material entering into the construction of vessels having increased in price, armor plate being purchased by the government direct not entering into the contract price.

The fact that the government has demonstrated its ability to construct vessels itself in its own navy yard, has also demonstrated, as shown above, that private shipyard owners have been receiving exorbitant prices for constructing government vessels. Even though the government may be expending larger sums in the construction of ships of a certain size and burden than contract yards will build them for, yet total cost to the government falls below that which it would be compelled to pay were not the government prepared to do its own work.

But aside from all these considerations, there is a human side. The eight-hour day is a reasonable and rational workday. Of all the nations of the earth the American Republic should establish the highest standard for the workmen of our day. The destiny of this country does not rest on the successful financial operations of a few ship building concerns at the expense of the working people, but upon its ability to equalize the burdens and equitable distribute to the great mass of the people a greater share of the wealth which they produce. The eight-hour day is here, and here it is going to stay, backed by a wholesome and humanitarian spirit.